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SUBJECT Interview with the MUFTI of Jerusalem		DATE 13 Feb 53
<p>PERTINENT INFORMATION</p> <p>Source: A prominent American Journalist and author now in the Middle East. Following are excerpts from one of his unpublished reports.</p> <p>1. "The MUFTI of Jerusalem (Haji Amin el-HUSAYNI), (about 55 years old), is immersed, of course, in a political struggle which has all but engulfed him innumerable times in the past twenty years. He does not talk of policy in the same broad terms as Ab el-Krim: he has only one subject, which is Palestine, I obtained from him—with the aid of a small pocket diary he has kept through the past ten years—a detailed account of his long wanderings from Jerusalem. By his own account it is a perpetual story of escape. He had been besieged in the Haram esh-Sherif—the great enclosure in Jerusalem which contains the so-called Mosque of Omar, the Dome of the Rock—for three months by British troops when he made his first escape in 1937. In that extraordinary area, with its mixture of Moslem, Christian and Jewish sanctities, he was safe enough because under ordinary circumstances troops would never enter it. He received information, however, that the troops were going to penetrate the Haram and arrest him. The Haram was full of armed Arabs who were in a great state of excitement; Hajj Amin foresaw a clash and much bloodshed in the sacred enclosure. He therefore disappeared in the night and appeared again in the Lebanon.</p> <p>2. "From then on, his appearances and disappearances were part of the story of the war. He was in Baghdad when the British brought Iraq into the war and Rashid Ali (then prime minister) revolted; he fled from there to Tehran, where he was in hiding for months. From Tehran he made his way by caravan—in disguise, of course—across Persia, Kurdistan and Anatolia. On one occasion in north Persian his caravan was detained by the Russians and he thought the end had come. In Turkey, where he came again to the surface, his presence was an embarrassment to the government. By this time the price on his head, according to his own information, was twenty-five thousand pounds. He took the only way left to him—to Vienna.</p> <p>3. "His visits to Rome and Berlin during the last three years of the war gave him the name, in western countries, of an Axis collaborator. He denies that he ever spoke of anything but Palestine and the independence of the Arabs. And since, in the time I have known him, these are the subjects which have completely dominated his talk I think it very likely. He spoke in Arabic on the Berlin radio, but according to his own story spoke only of the Arab cause. In brief, his story is that he went to the Axis countries because he had nowhere else to go, and that, being there, he took what advantage he could for the Arabs.</p> <p>He did obtain from the German and Italian governments a declaration in favor of Arab independence and unity, put out officially on their radios, but says himself that he had little faith in the intention behind these words.</p> <p>4. "The position of the MUFTI, so far as the west is concerned, has been greatly impaired by the flight to Berlin. It makes little or no difference to the Arabs, of course—they did not know or care as we did about the issues at stake. But there is</p> <p align="center">THIS IS ALL THE INFORMATION PERTINENT.</p> <p align="center">TO THE SUBJECT IN THIS DOCUMENT.</p> <p align="center">CROSS REFERENCE</p> <p align="center">SECRET</p> <p align="center">SECURITY INFORMATION</p> <p align="right">FILE THIS FORM IN FILE NO.</p>		

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an anomaly about a leader who cannot speak to the west at all, and in my opinion Hajj Amin himself feels it keenly. I have been told that the intellectuals and newer elements in Arab thought in Jerusalem, no longer look to him for leadership; he has been away from Jerusalem for ten years. But I was also told that his hold upon the Arab masses is as great as ever. And certainly throughout the Moslem world his more title—MUFTI of Jerusalem—is a symbol of great power. Without going into the intricacies of Arab clan politics, we can observe that on all the evidence it is going to be extremely difficult for any elements to dislodge Hajj Amin from a central and at times decisive role in the Palestine struggle.

5. The forms which that struggle is taking and is about to take are clearly enough discernible from Cairo. There is no doubt whatever that a great degeneration has been brought about in Palestine during the past twenty years among Arabs, Jews and British alike. So far as I can tell, the British have only one wish in the matter now, which is to get out. Their old mastery of government is paralyzed by an unworkable policy; and in spite of having sown the country with road blocks and strong points they cannot even keep order. Among the Jews and Arab murders, bank robbery, blackmail and every sort of Skulduggery seem to be accepted as ordinary instruments of the political struggle. It is not merely a struggle between Jews and Arabs; Jews also kill Jews and Arabs kill Arabs. The atmosphere of debate is impossible now, and all that can be foreseen upon the show of probabilities are chaos and anarchy."

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